

Agency (properties of pseudo-public spaces as a prelude)  
Monologues 01 - 06

01

Grand monumentalism is just one more aspect of the spectacle as reification of every-day life. We have to take back this material and put it to use. Let's stop this kind of plundering of the archives for contemporary purposes and, at least for a brief moment, promote the full scale recuperation of these once revolutionary endeavors.

The sovereignty of this contemporary purge stops all possibility to let dissidents and anti-institutional cultures whose concepts, symbols, metaphors and ideologies remain autonomous as anti-economic and anti-capitalist systems and prevail without being re-appropriated by the culture of individualist entrepreneurialism.

02

Minimalism is anthropocentric but commodities are everywhere and they show themselves to us, the viewers. They are not only art, but also art.

The objects in this exhibition are characterised by a suspended duration of being, allowing them to exist beyond use, exchange and even sign value.

These are objects that aspires to have a presence in the space equal to that of the viewer. But the fetishistic treatment of commodities empties them of meaning, hiding the social relations that were invested in them through labour.

This piece, which it is now my privilege to preface shows quite a sufficiency of real value, let's first look at its attributions of materiality -

Immediately an unexpected misgiving pangs us. First approach the elements of unavailability.

Of course one would not want to attribute a phenomenon of this magnitude to a singular causal explanation but as an 'objet trouvé' it might be put on a shelf or mounted on the wall and be treated as that of art in itself but this is not a found object, neither is it a readymade or part of an assemblage. The object is not only evidence but also a witness.

There are three important key points here: first, that the choosing of the object itself does not manifest as a creative act. Secondly, by keeping the 'useful' function of the object it cannot according to the dogmatic guidelines of the readymade principle be art. Thirdly, that the lack of the addition of a title to the object consequently ads no 'new thought'; no new meaning.

One speculative theory, however, would argue that the elimination of use-value from the object is undoubtedly one of the primary conditions that induces disembodiment from object experience. Here no such elimination is made. (washes hands)

The seemingly archaic notions of the readymade with standards once avant-garde, now thick with dust and provincial tedium, only serves to obey the demands of the genre itself. We must admit that this brilliant progress in our field has yielded its reward but lets not prefix this dogmatic approach as narrative to the work we see here! This move from artist-as-maker to artist-as-chooser questions the status of the artist as well as the object. But I would claim that the attempt to apply any authority over these things, to own them, is a failed task. It remains a commodity also now, even at the moment we escort it into a parallel process and explore its participatory potential. (washing hands after bathroom visit is encouraged)

If it is one of the tasks of sculptural production to articulate corporeal experience then conditions generate the disembodiment of sculpture; the abstract and symbolic have gained material-like qualities but once it is no longer on show it is not again, but also (still) then, a soap dispenser. The artist has set in motion a transformation that leaves the object unchanged. This is open for consideration without laying aside the critical scalpel, but it should be said that in the chaotic times in which we live, negative criticism is everywhere waiting in force, since its preponderant purpose is to uphold, beyond our pleasure or displeasure, mere trendiness.

03

Let's remember that it is not the action of the skilled alone that is to be seen in the center but every degree of proficiency in all that is going on. This point is crucial to understand how vision can work as a stimulus, engendering action in the company gathering here.

The service should be relatively autonomous but the curated syntax which is her arrangement is the world in which the piece connects to. Your somatic presence as participants help fortify the authorship of this work as artistic gestures. There is a process of normalisation that advances the dialogue and then a conversation begins...

This is merely an overture, an introduction to something more substantial. The superior attitude is restricted to its method of display. Narrative should hasten, neither clumsily nor lazily, to criticism restricted to the person, group or area concerned.

I feel that it is necessary to work against conventional forms of historical memorialisation that reduce social relations to paralysed imagery and pacifying representations. Simply working with the material of every day life focusing on the analytic strength of the work and offering a way of understanding the mutations of contemporary capitalism purging itself from public openness.

Combining pragmatism and strategic thinking in this relational as well as spacial experience, the critical faculties expands the narrowly defined parameters of the range of space and forces us to reevaluate something.

04

But let us assume then that a work of art is not only its content but also the limitations of its milieu.

Is it possible to retrieve that innocence before all theory learned when the viewer knew no need to justify themselves? Was then a work experienced not only legible because of the summary of one's experiences? Whatever it may have been in the past, the idea of content in which you are asked to position yourself is today mainly a hindrance, a rationalised hill, a subtle or not so subtle philistinism hidden behind the pretense of connoisseurs.

The emphasis is on the social value of this interaction, not the physical or formal integrity of a given work or the artist's experience in producing it. Rather the thought had crossed her mind that she might remove crucial elements at any time, or even annihilate any art, recognisable as such, altogether. The absence is present.

I want to suggest that this is because the idea of art is now perpetuated in the guise of certain environments and systems and we must consider the obstacles we must overcome before

encountering 1st these spaces and 2nd these works. It is through this theory that the appreciation of art becomes problematic and in need of defense.

Most evidently any artist working in a public space at present has to confront a complex set of problems and tasks, with the additional actuality of the pseudo-public space these sets of problems and tasks also adds other dilemmas. Since the supposedly public space is only posing as a dichotomy within an independent zone, free from the pressures of accountability, institutional bureaucracy and the rigours of specialisation when in fact these are the very norms and standards that they adhere to.

The fallacy that art is an inherently erudite discussion can be scrapped without ever moving into the experience of producing it. Likewise, the need for truth is not constant; no more than the need for repose. An idea which is a distortion may have a greater intellectual thrust than the truth even though less lucidly realistic. The market which in this instant becomes the surrounding attitude and accounts for the value of exclusion as its most profitable, becomes the producer and as extension the artist thinks of the fruit of his or her own labour as a consumer would: as objects to be bought and sold. The viewer is converted not into a viewer, valuable as a visitor and as a seeker of experience but reduced to to the sum of one's pre-existing influence, capital and thus calculated importance.

05

Interpretation is not an absolute value.

To understand is not always to interpret; a gesture of mind situated in some timeless realm of capabilities. We can indeed know what we cannot observe.

Is interpretation then the demoralising revenge of the gradually stiffening intellect at the expense of the all embracing public capabilities? Making unavailable the kind of situations that are far more rich and engrossing.

Let's interlude with a brief submission to an exercise.

Let the media itself became the medium of the work, and its primary content.

Think of this structure of space as a small work of transparency. Within which a subtle arrangement of more space that form rooms. And within these rooms enter a mode of subjectivity, a status of experience, leave at the door the initial know-how, to-do in a familiar situation, heavy in form and stilted in interaction.

You enter in the front, at the most formal space, here a recess, purposefully structured as a situational strategy to come together; what is at stake in this transformation of these problematic spaces that shows contemporaries in conceptual settings? Here the individual is merely the residue of the experience of the dissolution of community.

Induced models of sociability in a behavioral economy where your status as the viewer alternates between that of a passive consumer, and that of a witness, associate, client, guest, co-producer and protagonist.

The most valuable rank in this social contract is of course that of the all-encompassing elitist attitudes of certain actors in the art world, who reveal their holy terror at the thought of genuinely public spaces and collective aesthetic experimentation and frolic in their love for boudoirs that are reserved for specialists.

The correlation between a value of a room and its direct assumed value assigned to any matter placed in this room is also in transference assigned to any viewer entering this space. A cornering occurs when the entering of this room assigns a value to yourself.

Do you facilitate a change in this room's qualities? Do you switch from passive to active? Does it allow you to exist as you enter it, or on the contrary, does it deny your existence as a subject and does its structure refuse to consider the other? Does it form a critique of what needs critique? If there was a corresponding space - time in reality, could you live in it?

In these ambient conditions, what are your assumed responsibilities?

Rather than considering the work of art to be autonomous, I draw your attention to the autonomy of our experience in relation to art.

Let's make this experience a matter, and temporarily, for simplicity sake; a thing in a homestead.

It is obvious that the things around you should be the things which mean most to you, which have the power to play a part in the continuous process of self-transformation, which is your life. That much is clear.

But this function has been eroded, gradually, because people have begun to look outward, to others, and over their shoulders, at the people who determine not only your pre-disposition by assigning value to these things but also the essence of your person. Which in turn has meant a replacement of the natural instinctive ornaments with the things which they believe will please and impress upon their visitors.

And the self-professed authorities of matter play on these anxieties by making ultimate truths of 'good taste', propriety and dignity, making it clear that you have no right to adorn or remove as you wish but forces you to adhere to that which is considered party to the mysteries of good design.

But the irony is that the visitors of your room don't seek this nonsensical sameness more than the people who live there, it is far more fascinating to enter non-homogenous room which is the living expression of a person or group of people. So that you can see their lives, their histories, their inclinations, displayed in manifest in any matter or with any medium. When we compare such an experience to the artificial staging of the rigid contemporary scenes of which we grow so dreary of it is impossible to deny that this domain is both entirely fraudulent and bankrupt.

In short almost all the basic human situations can be enriched by the qualities of independence from standardised circumstances. Do not be frightened by the hyper-aware contemporary sensors which urge you to be in fashion or threatens to leave you superfluous.

Today's distance is present in a strange absence of struggle for social co-presence of spectators before the artwork. Situations that are constructed for private use is labelled public even when these situations deliberately exclude others.

Trying to shake off the constraints of the ideology of mass communications, this general mechanisation of social functions gradually, but rapidly, reduces our relational space. Spaces claiming to be open to all are purposefully counter-active, restricting opportunities for exchange and the promotion of human relations.

I suggest then a site-repair; A narrowing down of character-flaws of this space. The hierarchy of the closed space posing as open must be evaluated, not only in this present but in view of human consciousness. In a culture whose already classical dilemma is the hypertrophy of the intellect, it is the assumption that a gesture of anarchistic reclamation of free circulation is a bitter aftertaste of symbolic non-conformism. Which inevitably will leave you behind, less likely to achieve 'success' and more likely to grow desperate and self-humiliating.

Paradoxically this tends to promote a status quo of conventional self-censoring, pre-agreed pragmatism, endless re-evaluation, curation, and homogeneous neutrality as conservative cultural hierarchy. The equation between the resulting consequential aesthetics and the market propels us into a regression where we encounter nothing but the deeply entrenched authority of the white male elite.

Anyone claiming that these arguments have grown tired and orthodox is anyone who brews in the stagnate lukewarm bathwater where the idea that by social exclusion and unavailability we reach higher by reaching fewer.

The same bathers who force us to account for the value of art with marketing statistics and audience figures become essential to securing justification for the arts. Then any experimentation and right to work without goals or result loose the capability of becoming a gesture or thought in the process. The bather's statement is then that any socially inclusive art, as a reception, is only a camouflage fostering aspirations to eventually become socially exclusive art and in its transformation add both intellectual and monetary value. Both to the work, the artist and the gallery by extension. Lost is then the discarding and disregarding of institutional spaces and the ambition to maintain a practice that could collapse both socially and politically constructed boundaries, in acts of spontaneous communication. Which could both promote and further a movement into truly public spaces instead of being herded along the long corridors of bureaucracy and monotony into the most private domains. Where rooms within rooms open up for the estimable impossibility of widely beneficial outcome from a shared private experiences.